

***Civil Rights History Project***  
***Interview completed by the Southern Oral History Program***  
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***Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History & Culture***  
***and the Library of Congress, 2013***

Interviewees: Mr. Charles Jarmon, Mrs. Eleanor Stewart, Mr. John Dudley, Mrs. Frances Suggs, Mr. Harold Suggs, and Mr. Samuel Dove

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Location: Hyattsville, MD

Interviewer: Emilye Crosby

Videographer: John Bishop

Length: 2:32:59

Note: This interview was transcribed without access to video. Some speakers may be misidentified. Elaine Nichols was also present for this interview.

John Bishop: Ok, today we have different mikes set up. Channel 1 is the camera left mike Channel 2 is the camera right mic.

Emilye Crosby: I am Emilye Crosby of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill today, and I am conducting this oral history today as part of the Civil Rights History Project, which is an undertaking of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and the American Folklife Center in the Library of Congress. Today is June 28, 2013 and we are here with students from Adkin High School, and from left to right, Mr. Charles Jarmon, Mrs. Eleanor Stewart, Mr. John Dudley, Mrs. Frances Suggs, Mr. Harold Suggs, and Mr.

Samuel Dove. Mr. Dove was class of 1960 and everyone else was class of 1952? '51?

No? Several different ones. So what I'd like to do is ask everyone to introduce yourselves. If we could go around and say your name and what year you graduated? And then I'll come back with another question.

Charles Jarmon: My name is Charles Jarmon, and I graduated from Adkin High School, class of 1957.

Eleanor Stewart: My name is Eleanor Stewart and I graduated from Adkin High School in 1955.

John Dudley: My name is John Dudley and I graduated from Adkin High School in 1952.

Frances Suggs: My name is Frances Suggs and I graduated from Adkin High School in 1952.

Harold Suggs: My name is Harold Suggs and I graduated from Adkin High School in 1953.

Samuel Dove: My name is Samuel Dove. I graduated from Adkin High School in 1960.

EC: I wonder if we could start by going around the room again, and if I could ask each of you to talk a little bit about your family background, and sort of growing up in Kinston, North Carolina? I guess maybe if you could each speak for a couple of minutes and we could do some follow up questions on your background and then we could talk about the protest. Mr. Jarmon?

CJ: My name is Charles Jarmon. I grew up in Kinston, North Carolina, in an extended family background. My mother and father did not live together, and I grew up

with my mother and my aunt and she passed when I was ten years old. My father passed when I was twelve years old. So I grew up with my grandmother and my aunt and uncle. And we stayed in the same place in Lincoln City, in Kinston, North Carolina. And when I was in the eleventh grade, we moved on the, I guess you would call it the cow pasture, in another part of town. And there I stayed until I left to go to the military in 1957.

EC: What kind of work did your parents do, and your grandparents?

CJ: My father was a mortician and my mother was a tobacco factory worker. She worked in the, and I think most people in that neighborhood, worked either in the shirt factory or the tobacco factory. And when the season was out, they worked as domestics.

EC: Mrs. Stewart?

ES: I grew up in Kinston, North Carolina, on North Street. And my parents were, my father was Isaac Darden, and he was a businessman. And my mother was a musician, and she played for the First Baptist Church as Minister of Music. And she stayed at home. She was a housewife. She took care of the children. I am the oldest and I had four brothers; one is deceased. And we had a very good life. My father was a very good caretaker of all of us, so we didn't want for much of anything. He provided everything for us. So, you know, I walked to school every day like all of the kids in the area, and enjoyed my schooling. [5:00] As a youngster, I really did not go to the public schools in Kinston. I can't even think of the name of the school, but it was outside of Kinston. There was a couple, Reverend and Mrs. Moses, they came by my house every morning and picked me up, as a youngster, and took me to school, until I was in the fourth grade. Then I became a student in the public schools in Kinston, North Carolina.

EC: Was that a private school or a school in another community?

ES: It was not a private school. It was a school in another community. And I guess you'd call it a school, I guess you would say, out in the country. [Laughs] Because I felt like in Kinston, we were in the city. But they were very gracious in doing that, so I came to the public schools in Kinston as a fourth grader. And then when Samson Elementary School was built, my class was the first school to enter that school as sixth graders, and then from there I went on to Adkin High School and finished there.

EC: Do you know why your family sent you to the school out in the country?

ES: Well, I think that the people, he was a minister, Reverend and Mrs. Moses, wonderful family friends, very close. And he was the principal of that little school and the school, I remember, it was a potbellied stove and there were two to three classes in the same classroom. And he was the principal and I think it went through high school as I recall, but I never got that far. But they were just good family friends and was gracious enough to take me along.

EC: And your parents thought you'd be well looked-after, I guess.

ES: They did. And I was.

EC: What kind of work did you, you said your father was a businessman?

ES: Yes. He ran a poolroom and he ran a club called the Tuxedo Club. It was a private club. Also, it was a soda shop that he also ran downstairs. And he built a commercial building in Kinston at the corner of Adkin and Tower Hill Road, which he rented out to a family that was well known in Kinston, called the Beaches. And of course the property that he ran belonged to the Beaches, and they were good friends so they just rented from each other. Very interesting family affair. So that's how that worked.

EC: Mr. Dudley?

JD: My name is John Dudley and I grew up in Kinston, North Carolina, 'til eighteen years old. My mother and father are deceased, but I did have the pleasure of having them for most of, all of my eighteen years. My mother died in 2010. My father died in '74, and they had eleven kids. We moved into Mitchell Wooten Court. My grandmother also lived in Mitchell Wooten Court, but she didn't have anybody in her house, and I also had an aunt there, so that kind of made plenty room for everybody. Now, I lived with my aunt three years, mainly my high school years. I didn't know I was poor because such as it was, my father provided three meals a day, breakfast, lunch, and dinner, which I am not used to now, but we had that breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Now, at eighteen years old, my senior year of high school, I would travel to Atlantic City to work. And that would take me through college. I worked every summer. And one or two summers, Eleanor was there.

Also, I worked as a kid at a grocery store, and I delivered groceries to Eleanor's house every Saturday, and some other homes. And I had a good life. And college, I was able to maintain because I worked through college.

EC: What kind of work did you parents do?

JD: Now, my father was the, I guess you'd call it a mechanic today, but he was the handyman at Mitchell Wooten Court. [10:00] My mother worked seasonal work in the tobacco factory. And I do remember after World War II, that she worked alongside many, many German prisoners who worked at the factory. That was very interesting. I guess about forty, fifty. That was when they brought them to the city, quite a few of them, in there up in Kinston, and she worked right alongside those and there was never a problem. They were guarded by security. And I guess that's basically it until —

EC: Until we move the story on?

JD: Yes. Go forward.

EC: Mrs. Suggs?

FS: Ok. I grew up in a family of about five or six. I had a sister and a brother. My brother is older. They are both still living. And a mother and father who were in the family and a grandmother and her husband. So we had a pretty interesting family set up. We went to, let's see, we grew up, we went to school first at Lincoln City Elementary School. That was a small school, maybe six or eight teachers. Then we went to Tower Hill Road and we mainly went to that school because the principal was my mother's nephew and she said she wanted us to go to a better school. She thought it was better. And anyway, we went to Tower Hill Road and then to Atkins. And life was pretty good to us. My father worked at a shirt factory. I really don't know what we did. I just know that he was able to come home for lunch and watch his stories every day.

He rode a bicycle and of course he didn't know at that time that that was very good for him. And he would come home for lunch every day. And my mother worked several different types of jobs. She worked in the tobacco factory and she also did domestic work and then eventually she worked in a Piney Chemical Company. She passed in the year that I graduated, 1953, the year I graduated from high school. I am trying to remember the kind of life that we had. We had a very, very good life. We interacted with the neighbors and we were in and out of the houses. And we had a lot of fun. I was musical, and my sister was musical, at least she wouldn't say that but she was musical. And my brother was musical and still sings today at the age of eighty-two. So that's pretty much my life in Kinston, on Shine Street.

EC: Mr. Suggs?

HS: Hope you have some time. [Laughter] It's interesting, you know, the experiences are very similar because we are coming from the same—I was an adopted child. I had a brother. But the parents, the people that raised me were very loving, you know, but the situation behind the separation of my brother and myself, I guess were told to me so the validity of them I have to accept as they were told to me. I was born in Greene County, which is the adjoining county to Lenoir County, which is Greene County, in a place called Snow Hill, North Carolina. And Greene County is adjacent to Lenoir County, which is Kinston. All my schooling was done in Lenoir County, from the first grade right [15:00] on up through graduation.

I had a very interesting, well I guess you could say childhood. I was an only child of an adoptive family. They cared very much for me, and I realized that as the years went on. I met my father for the first time when I was in the fifth grade, my biological father. That's also the time I met my wife, who was sitting right beside me in the fifth grade. And my father bought me a bicycle. A Schwinn bike. It has a spring in the back. And from that day forward I became an entrepreneur, so to speak. Seriously. He bought me a bike and with that bicycle I got me a paper route. I used to deliver papers. I had 120 customers and with those customers, paid me \$7.20 a week. Those customers, I got each one of those customers to subscribe to the *Afro-American*, and each paper I sold, I got three cents for a paper. And we're talking about 1945, so in 1945, I had an income from the papers, the daily paper and the paper that I sold, was \$10.80. With that bicycle on Saturday mornings, I went to the A&P with a wooden crate, a lettuce crate at that time, and then my customers, I delivered their groceries to their homes because at that time

people didn't have cars.

And I had a goal set for \$15. I wasn't quitting until I made \$15. And so I did that. And so on Sunday mornings, I went to Sunday school in the afternoon but on Sunday mornings I went through the neighborhood and collected their shoes to shine them for church. And so I would work up until enough time to go to Sunday school, and we had a relationship with the guy who owned the shoeshine parlor, you know like, you have to shine a pair for him and a pair for you, so you get paid. And so I did that and I did that right on up, really, through high school.

They mentioned tobacco. Tobacco was a source of income for kids at that time but I didn't like working in green tobacco. It was too hard of work, and the hours were too long. So I did everything I could to make sure I didn't have to go into that tobacco field. And we lived in the housing project. And in the housing project, they would allow you to keep your lawn up because they would furnish the lawn mower, the push lawn mower. So what I did, some of my customers, my paper customers who didn't have children, I'd ask them to let me do their lawns for them. And I had customers throughout the neighborhood, that I would check out a lawn mower from the office and keep it during the summer. And early in the morning I would get up and do those lawns, and then when the kids would come home in the afternoon from the tobacco fields, I am sitting up in the shady tree drinking Donald Duck orange juice, frozen Donald Duck orange juice. Not only that, I don't have all that tobacco gum on me, so to speak.

And then after that, when my foster parents passed. The first one died in April of '49, and then in fact, this is my neighbor, his mother sort of took me under their arm because I was left with everything to do. And when she passed, I had to do everything, so



to speak, when my mother passed. And I had no intentions of going to college. I never thought I needed a college education to learn how to make a living because I had been working at a very early age. I don't regret having gone to college, in fact it might have enhanced the opportunities I received afterward, but she wanted me to go to college so I went to college in honor of her.

When I finished college, I went into then military, and I was twenty-three months, two weeks and a day into the [20:00] military, and that was one of the most rewarding experiences that I've ever had, because it opened up a great many doors for me. And that's pretty much it.

EC: Mr. Dove?

SD: Well, I guess I'd better start from the beginning. I grew up in Mitchell Wooten Court as well. Right across from Harold. I learned an awful lot just growing up watching, because when I was five years old, my mother and father divorced. There were five of us in the family; I had a sister, a sister, then three brothers in a row. I am the baby. When my father left, he left home, he came to me, he gave me fourteen cents and said, "Give this to the boys." I gave a nickel to my older brother, a nickel went to my middle brother, and the four cents went to me, and of course I thought I was rich. I learned to read at four years old. I used to sit in my mother's lap as she read the newspaper, and I would go, "What's that word? What's that word?" at two and three. And before you know it, I could read.

So when it came time to go to kindergarten, I went, but I only lasted one day. The second day, the teacher says, "Why you bringing this boy here. He can read. Plus he's causing all kinds of trouble." So that was the end of my kindergarten career. I had to wait

to go to first grade, until the next year. Anyway, growing up in Kinston was really a delight because I began to observe others, to kind of take the place of my father. Because when my father was there, he delivered furniture for [22:34]. And he had his truck, he'd bring his truck home, park it in front of Harold's house or in front of our house and we'd be able to go on rides on weekends, et cetera. But of course that didn't last long.

My mother was basically a homemaker. What she did, she took in laundry. And when she couldn't make it by taking in laundry, she would do some seasonal work in the tobacco factory. But she also had a side thing going. She made something called apple jacks, and potato jacks, which were known throughout the area. So we made out pretty good. But my brothers had started going to the golf ground, as we called it then, caddying at the Kinston country club. So, you pass down the tradition and at nine years old, that's what I did. I did it until about thirteen, and I ran into a little problem. The guy who beat Jack Nicklaus in the national juniors that year was the son of the pro at the Kinston country club, and he made a mistake one day and called me boy. So I jacked him up on a fence and I didn't caddy any more after that.

So, we had a good life. During summer times I frequently would travel to the North, to Camden, New Jersey or to Brooklyn, because I had relatives or siblings living in those places. So I got to see another aspect of life in the United States other than Kinston, North Carolina, which was really good. I also at that point became an athlete. Back in high school, I went out for the football team, made it, and my mother wouldn't let me play. So, subsequently I went out for the basketball team and she didn't want me to play that either because in little [25:00] league I had hurt my knees. Well, the first time I hurt my knees, I was on top of our iron gymnasium and somebody, watching the Globe

Trotters play, and somebody yelled, "Police!" and I jumped twenty feet in the dark. So I was injured and she really didn't want me to play. So anyway, I would up being able to play sports, at least basketball. I learned to play tennis by watching people like John Dudley and Calvin Thompson. [Speaking to another interviewee] I think you played, too. And just watching them is how I learned to play tennis.

And one day I got a beat-up racquet, big hole in the middle, and I decided I was going to get one of those waterlogged balls, and I was going to try to hit it. And of course you couldn't hit it in the middle. So that's how I learned how to serve by turning the racquet. That way you're not going to hit it in the middle. So long story short, I subsequently did play basketball and tennis in college, but I learned from those experiences, and never took a lesson.

Eventually, I did go to college at Fayetteville State University, where again I was going to play football, but the athletic director was the basketball coach, and he said no way after the first day. But you can play a spring sport, so the spring sport became tennis instead of track. Again, that whole experience was for me, I think somebody said before, I really didn't know I was poor. I was living in Mitchell Wooten Courts, we had indoor plumbing there. I was able to travel in the summer time. I was able to see different experiences. And I was able to experience some untoward kinds of things as I grew and got around, didn't understand it initially, but came to learn what they meant. But we got through it. [Recording pauses]

JB: Ok, we're back.

EC: I wanted to ask a couple follow-up questions, Mr. Dove, which will actually lead into some of the other follow-up, I think for everybody. You mentioned at the end

there some untoward things that happened, and you also talked about the incident at the country club and the shout of police, and so I guess with the country club, I wonder if you could say what happened with that, whether you didn't go back because your family was concerned? I guess I'm interested in what race relations actually looked like and how they worked there in Kinston. Mr. Suggs?

HS: That's an interesting question you have, because we all did some things similar. We all caddied at the country club. We all caddied at the country club. And that experience. It was almost like, you wanted to do anything you could to stay out of the tobacco field. And caddying was one of the things that you could do because you could do it every day. And incidentally, you know, there was one day you were allowed to play.

CJ: Monday.

HS: No, it was Wednesday. It was on Wednesday, but there was a caddy house and that was run by a fellow African American. And it was, you see so many things that take place now that, you know I tell my wife, you know it's like I've been a golf fan for a long time but I wasn't able to play golf, because there were limited, you know, and we used to take one club for everything, because that was it. But you had some experiences caddying, and you had some experiences based on the times that it was, you know, and what you did, so to speak. And even caddying was hard work. For instance, you had to caddy two rounds and you only got sixty-five cents. And you had two ways you could make some money. You could either caddy, or what they call now, you could run down balls or look for lost balls. You made more money finding lost balls [30:00] than you did for caddying because you could sell those balls and then you could make more money. And so, it was an experience that you really had to have lived it to relate to it. There

weren't, I guess for lack of a better—you knew where your limits were at the country club, so to speak, and there were some things you didn't do, you didn't say, and it was just a way of life, so to speak.

SD: That's where I'll take up, because I did not accept some of those limits. Larry Beck called me boy. That's his name, he beat Jack Nicklaus in the national juniors in 1957, I believe it was. He called me boy that day. He shouldn't have done it, because I went at him, and we fought, and I won and I left the country club and I just chose not to come back. I knew that if I did come back, because his father was the pro, that I probably wouldn't get any bags. Nine years old, I started this, and I would carry two bags, eighteen holes. Now, I wasn't a little boy because I'm always big, and I was hefty then, because I was kind of a rump you might say, at that point. I just grew taller later. And I could handle myself.

FS: I just want to say something about the tobacco field that everyone talks about avoiding. I did work with tobacco as a hand. We would be picked up, usually about 5:30, 6:00 in the morning. Very early. And we were carried to the employer's farm and the primers in the field, which is what usually the men did. In North Carolina, the tobacco leaves are taken from the stalk and put on a wagon and brought to a barn, and then the ladies are waiting around and there are some ladies that hand the tobacco out of the wagon to the loopers, and I did both. I did handing and looping. And early in the morning that wet tobacco is slapping in your face, with worms and whatnot. But I wouldn't say it was degrading, but it wasn't a very nice way to make a living. I think we were making something like \$3 a day. And we would work until after all of the primers had finished priming the tobacco, and then we would have to hang up. That was the term for taking

the tobacco that had been looped on the sticking and handing them to the guys who went in the barn—so dangerous—all up into the upper part of the barn to hang the tobacco so it could be cured, and by the time we finished that, it was time to go. Gummy and nasty and usually riding on the back of a truck, back into the city. And that was usually what a day consisted of.

HS: Let me just say, the truck she is talking about was a truck that was pulled by a mule. It didn't have a truck driver. And I was a truck driver. [Laughter]

CJ: I was also.

HS: But you had to very careful, because if you made too sharp a turn, pulled the line too sharp, it would turn over. I turned one over some time. They was all time, but you learn the skills. So you go between the tobacco field and the tobacco barn, and the tobacco barn in there with the loopers and the handlers.

EC: So you're talking about driving the tobacco. [concurrency]

CJ: And the thing about driving the truck, once you get back into the field, you would have to wait until the truck is filled. And so in the meantime, you have a chance to look at the croppers. And I tell you, so many lies are told, and so many jokes are told. A lot of folklore. And that's the way they passed the time, singing and so forth. That way they used to kill the time [35:00] and ease the pain of the job. But yes, I was part of the Golden Leaf tobacco, that was part of the product we produced.

JB: Do you remember any of the songs?

ES: "This Little Light of Mine." [Laughter]

CJ: No, I mean, this was a joke in terms of how far, and I remember one of the jokes. I can see as far as the Empire State Building. There's a fly on there. He's winking

his eye at me. Different kinds of ... you know, competing, and dozens...talk and different kinds of things.

CJ: Trying to make the day better.

CJ: Trying to make the day go back faster.

EC: Mr. Dudley?

JD: My experience ... I have two things I want to talk about. Three. First of all, I worked with a Caucasian, Jewish guy, who married a white woman. And he was ostracized from his family, a very prominent family in Kinston, North Carolina, the Stadiems. I worked for H. Stadiem. He ran the lady's shop. The other two brothers ran, across the street, the men's shop. Now, he had always wanted a restaurant. He said, "Dudley, when you graduate would you consider going to chef's school and running a restaurant for me?" He liked me very much. But he used to travel also, although he had his own store, he would travel around North Carolina selling clothes, samples for the stores to pick out. Once we got out of the city limit, he would let me drive. I didn't have a license. And when we got to a certain place and we had to stay overnight, he would also first have to find me a place to stay and if I went to that city often enough, I knew where I could stay.

So I was treated very well in terms of prejudice, but I do remember one experience that upset me. They had just established the bus in Kinston. It used to stop in front of the projects, Mitchell Wooten Court. My mother and I got on and I guess we sat about five seats from the back. There was a white guy who came on the bus and he stood right beside my mother. There were only about six people on the bus. He stood right beside her and he said, "Nanny, aren't you going to get up and let me sit down?" There

were seats up front, there were seats in the back. And the bus driver happened to hear it. I'm nine years old. I didn't understand that. But the bus driver said, "Look, man. We don't need this today. Come take a seat wherever you can. There are plenty of seats in the front." But I never got that. In terms of being treated fairly, I did pretty good because H. Stadiem, I worked for him for three or four years, and we got along well. So that was my major experience with Caucasian individuals.

SD: I need to take off on that because I had a bus experience. It was when I was, I think I was twelve. I had been to the country club and that day I had money, I had made money, so I took the bus home. Well, the bus stopped at Queen St. so it could change, and from Queen St. it would go through Lincoln City back through Mitchell Wooten Court. Well, I got a seat that was just right opposite the back door. At Queen St. And at the next stop, which was just before it turned onto Lincoln St., a white woman got on the bus. And she had her bag. And somehow she made her way in front of me even though I was on the inside. There was a white man sitting beside me. She stood there and all of a sudden she asks for my seat. [40:00] And she said, "I'm white." And I replied, "And so is toilet paper." Ok? And upon which time she called the bus driver, who had made a stop. He came back, asked me to move to the rear of the bus. Well, by now we are in Lincoln City, so there are any number of black men who are at the back of the bus, and there are two or three who said, "Leave that boy alone." And he did. He went back, told the lady to come up and sit, there was a space right behind him that was tight, but to sit there, and he didn't say anything more about it until we got through Lincoln City, and I got off the bus at Mitchell Wooten Court. But the next year, there was a lawsuit, a lady in our community named Mrs. Hannibal.



(male): Dr. Hannibal.

SD: Dr. Hannibal filed a lawsuit, against the ICC because they issued the license for this bus company and challenged them. Within a year, that bus system did not exist and today you go back to Kinston, there is no bus system in Kinston.

EC: Why was she challenging the bus system?

SD: Because of separate seating on the buses.

EC: I was going to ask you about that because you are describing a situation that sounds like it is somewhat integrated even if it's not easy.

SD: The bus really was not integrated.

CJ: But Mrs. Hannibal's husband was a doctor, and she was an activist, even before, and very, very active in civil rights.

JD: You're going to hear her name quite a bit because of that fact. Because we knew our mothers and fathers couldn't interact like she could. Because she was independent, her husband was a doctor. And so she could do pretty much things that needed to be done in terms of activating the situation.

SD: His clientele was all black.

EC: Mrs. Stewart wants to say something, then I have a couple of follow-up questions I'd like to clarify.

ES: Because the men are talking, I just want to get my little piece in with Frances. I had forgotten but as a child, I always liked to work. I liked to do stuff. So I was out there trying, so, Frances, I did get on one of those trucks, with a group of kids on the corner, and go to work. So what she told, was what I experienced in the barn, with handing. I was a hander. I didn't ever loop. What happened to me, was I got tobacco

poison. So I had to go to Dr. Hannibal. So that ended my tobacco work, but also I said, let me try the next thing. So I tried cotton. Cotton, you had to wear a sack and you got paid by the pounds that you picked. So I think that everybody tried to pick a hundred pounds? I probably picked maybe twenty, so that was one day for me.

JD: You made about eighty cents.

ES: Probably, if that. But what I did do, after that, I worked at a drug store in Kinston called Standard Drug Store. Also, would you believe in Kinston they had a drive-in drug store? I didn't work at the drive-in, but that was something unique to Kinston. But I worked there for several years and was watched, because blacks, Afro Americans, could not sit down. So if they came in to get food, you had to go to a counter at the end and take your food out. So that was the experience there. But also I remember going into the five-and-dime stores. One was called Rose's. And you walk up to get their candy, but if a white person came in, they wouldn't wait on you. You had to just stand there and wait your turn.

So one day, a group of us, we were in there trying to get candy, and they wouldn't wait on us, kept putting us back in the end of then line. So somebody finally said, "Give me this, give me this." All kind of different candy. And then when they packed it up, they said, "We don't want any of it," and just walked out. So that was a way of trying [45:00] to get back, to make herself heard, subtle-like. But those experiences were unique and special for us, but I always liked to work.

EC: What was your job at the drug store?

ES: I was a waitress, back behind the counter. I waited on all the customers that came in and sat down. They would place their orders and we would take them to the table

and what have you. And the ones that couldn't sit down, they would have to go down to the end of the counter, and we would pack their lunch, food up, and they would take it out.

EC: I think in some places that was a white job, but not in Kinston.

JB: Can we pause for one sec? [Laughter]

EC: I am going to ask about the bus, but first Mrs. Stewart because you mentioned about your work and the men talking, I am assuming that caddying was a job that the boys could do but not the girls, is that right?

[General assent from the group.]

EC: So then part of what you all are describing is making choices within the options that are available: [Assent.] I was going to ask you, Mr. Jarmon, you mentioned the culture, the folklore in the fields, with the tobacco. And you said you did that work and you caddied, I know a few of you have, and I guess I was wondering if you could think about—maybe I should ask about the bus first—but if you could think about the pros and cons of working in the tobacco field with a larger group of African Americans as opposed caddying, where you might be more isolated, walking with a white person or something.

CJ: First of all, that tobacco, in the field it was integrated. In the field it was integrated. Simply because, I mean the croppers, the people that were working in the field, you had white guys who cropped tobacco along with the black guys. And believe it or not, there was a degree of camaraderie in the field, working, that didn't exist once you got out of the field. So it weren't all blacks working ...

SD: It could be the farmer's son working.

HS: It might even be the farmer himself. So there was a relationship in that atmosphere that was a little different after you got out of the tobacco field, so to speak, even down to drinking out of the same water bottle. Because it was so hot, they would ask the trucker, to bring the water. And he would bring a mason jar of water and everybody would take a swig, and that was it.

FS: I am remembering lunchtime in the tobacco field. Usually, and a lot of time, a lot of places that I worked, the owner's wife would prepare the food. She would leave the handing station maybe thirty minutes prior to lunch, and she would prepare lunch for everybody. And we would go to the house to eat, and we did eat at the table, yes we did.

EC: About how many people are we talking about working at a time on a farm?

CJ: Well, it depends.

JD: They had different farms. And the tobacco owners would come in the town and pick up the number of persons he needed for that day. And so there were about four or five different farmers coming in [Male: They came in at certain locations.] At certain locations and all of that. But about the food, that was pretty interesting because that depended on how much you made. In other words, if you carried your own lunch, that's one thing. They would always say, \$5 a day if I feed you, \$4 a day if you feed yourself [He intends to demonstrate that the lunch was paid for out of the worker's wage.]. You remember this? I've done that many times.

EC: Would that be the other way around? Did I hear that right?

JD: To feed yourself.

HS: The primers or the croppers we referred to, they made more money than anybody else. And that was, at ten hours it was \$10, a dollar an hour. You've worked in

the field for ten hours.

EC: And this was in the forties.

HS: This was in the forties. And the people working in the barn, make maybe \$4. Maybe \$4 a day.

EC: And is it mostly men in the field?

HS: Men in the field and women in the barn.

EC: And in the barn, looping, that's integrated, too.

ES: It could have been. [50:00] Not often.

EC: Ok, so mostly not but it could occasionally be depending on the situation on the farm.

CJ: The farmer's wife, she was usually at the barn because she would leave from there and go fix dinner. She'd leave at eleven. She would leave at eleven, and have lunch ready at twelve. I mean, it was a spread just like the Ponderosa. And she'd leave at five, and because you work from seven to six, but she'd leave at eleven and have lunch ready, she'd leave at five and have dinner ready.

FS: Because oftentimes, some of the croppers spent the whole week with the employer on the farm.

EC: Where would they stay?

CJ: Wherever, you know. You could stay at the tobacco barn, sleep under there and you cook corn under the hot ashes, you know. It just was a way of life. You hadn't seen anything else different, so you know this is the way it happens.

SD: With Cunningham, you had little shanties there in the shade. But there were times that women worked the fields. There were something called "suckers," flowers that

grew on top? They had to be nipped, and I understand they had to be nipped, otherwise they would stunt the growth of the plant. So they were nipped, and that juice would just get all over you.

HS: That's definitely from curing tobacco, from that stage, it was an earlier stage in the growing of the tobacco plant itself.

EC: So that's earlier, when it's growing, you have to pinch the suckers off to make sure that it grows right. And then curing is after the harvest, part of the harvest system.

CJ: Curing is all the way through. On a given day, as she indicated, you hang the tobacco up. The croppers in the field would do that. And then you would have maybe a caretaker who would, depending on what you use, would fire up the flutes to cure the tobacco.

ES: I just wanted to say that at the end of the season, what was kind of rewarding was they would have a barbeque. And I don't know if Frances experienced that, but that was one of the best parts. You wanted to stay with that farmer, because you knew that ... and barbecue was something special in Kinston, North Carolina. There's nothing like North Carolina barbecue. I don't know if you've had it. [Laughter] They would prepare the pigs and everything, and we would sit at the end and just have a good time.

CJ: Don't forget the watermelons.

HS: But there's so much history. They had a radio station there, WFTC, World's Foremost Tobacco Center. And that's why I asked you, did you have the time, because everybody here could tell you a story pretty much all day. And going back to the golf, the used to, North Carolina State, they had a group called the Wolfpack. They used to play.

They lived in the area, but they took over the Kinston club on Wednesdays. The Wolfpack. I remember a guy, he was a very prominent guy for us. He was a doctor. We called him Johnny Fairbough. Johnny Fairbough, and Dr. Haddyack. They all came out, and I remember them guys. I used to caddy for them. Guy named Slim. And Mr. Boulder.

SD: Slim Montgomery.

HS: He had a brother he called [Bull Dick]. But he was one of the cheapest golfers, though that I ever ... you know, you got sixty-five cents for two rounds of caddying, and he'd give you a dollar and want his thirty-five cents change back. And I'll never forget that. But those are some things that you just will never forget. But anything that you could do to stay out of that tobacco field, I did. But getting back to her father, and the Beaches. The Beaches in Kinston, it was a pretty prominent name. They used to sponsor a lot of talent that would come to town. I don't know. We had a lot of artists, we used to call it the Chitlin' Circuit. One-nighters, like James Brown, Amos Milburn, Charles Brown, Ruth Brown, Buddy Johnson, Arthur Prysock, all those people. Larry Darnell. They would come to Kinston. Kinston was the hub, it was the hub. It was right in the center between Camp Lejeune, Cherry Point, Fort Bragg, and Seymour Johnson Air Force field [55:00]. So on Friday night, everybody—it was referred to as K-Town, during the war it was referred to as K-Town. It was very, like they had a red light district, too. It had a red light district. Everything that you wanted, you could get if you knew where to get it. That's when I began my entrepreneurship

CJ: A very unusual place.

ES: Yes it was.

HS: What happened was, I was scalping before it became prominent. Up here,

scalping is good because the servicemen had to come to Kinston and buy their tickets, but they had to get in line, so to speak. So it would cost two dollars to go to the dance, but I used to buy a bunch of tickets and wait until the servicemen would come, because I would tell them, like, you can pay me two dollars and you don't have to stand in line, and you've got more time, but I was buying them for \$1.50, and I was selling them for \$2.00.

EC: That's a pretty good markup.

HS: No question.

CJ: Now, the interesting thing about Kinston, being around those bases, army bases. We had to grow up real fast, because we had sisters, and many times those soldiers would come in and kind of try to take over. So we had to defend the rights of our sisters, and that meant we had to do some little things that we didn't really want to do, but we did what we had to do to defend our honor and our sisters. And that was every weekend. And they used to come to town and practically every weekend, going back to camp, you would hear of some major accident. I would say on a military base, you would have three soldiers being killed during that month, having liquored up going back to the base.

EC: What kind of incidents would you have with your sisters?

CJ: Well, they came in to date the girls. Many times they were our girlfriends. And many times we had to confront them and if they didn't want to cooperate and leave your girlfriend alone, you had to do it in the dark. That's as much as I am going to say about that.

ES: But I was going to add, my father did run a club, it was a private club on North St. And there was another club before his club called the Cotton Club. On Friday night, when those soldiers came in, you could not get down ... they just came in in



droves. They would not only be in the club, my father had a window he could look out, because his customers, they were screened. He didn't let anybody come in. They would just, if they couldn't get in the club, then they would stand in the street, and they would just congregated. It was just an amazing kind of thing, that they loved ... but I guess, it was, like you said, it was the hub. And so they all came to Kinston. It was sometimes called the little New York.

HS: Sugar Hill.

FS: And I guess we have to remember the times, there probably weren't any other places where they could go, because mostly the black soldiers, they were just like us. We were black and we had our problems, so they had their problems as far as places to go?

EC: Was this mostly during the war, or was this after the war as well?

Multiple speakers: After the war.

EC: Because somebody had mentioned the war and I wanted to make sure because it sounded as if it kept going.

JD: It was definitely into the fifties.

[clarification of spelling of Mitchell Wooten Courts]

EC: Ok, and then I want to go back to the buses. You all said they were segregated, but you mentioned you were sitting next to a white man.

SD: Yeah, he was sitting next to me.

EC: So how does that work in the context of segregated buses?

SD: Well, I was sitting first and he came on. As a matter of fact, he came on in front of the woman.

HS: There wasn't a white bus and a black bus, so to speak. It was a transit system

that picked up throughout the community. [1:00:00] And blacks and whites were allowed to ride the bus. There weren't two separate bus lines, though.

CJ: I think her point is, why were they sitting on the bus together?

EC: On the same seat.

CJ: On the same seat. But the point is, whites have always had a privilege. And do what they want to do. And sit where they want to sit. But you couldn't do it vice versa. That was the essence of it. And I recall one experience, and I must have been five or six years old, and you have these little strings on the bus, and I was pulling them, and just playing with it. And the guy, a blond-headed fellow, said, "Woman, shut that boy up!" And I remember that to the day, with the sarcasm and all those kind of things, and she said, "Yes, sir" or something. We also went on Bright St., the Simon Bright apartments. That's where we got off and I walked, because I lived between the white and black community.

JD: Now, there was an unwritten rule that white folk sat up front, and black folk sat in the back. Now, if the bus began to get crowded, black folk would have to get out of their seats and start moving back. The bus got crowded, more white folk in, black folk had to move to the back. Because white folk normally didn't sit behind the black folk.

SD: The line of demarcation on the bus normally was the back door, which was on the side. And where I was sitting at that time was right there, on that seat, and when the white fellow sat beside me, he didn't ask me to get up. The woman came behind him, and didn't ask him to get up. She asked me.

EC: So, I understand what you're saying about the prerogative, and so is that something that there were, was it typical or occasional that whites might do something

like that, and sit down like that man did and not make an issue of it, and then in other times they would make an issue of it, like the woman who did, coming behind.

SD: Well, as somebody said, it was kind of understood where your place was, and most people would just acquiesce and move. And that would be done on a regular basis. I just didn't that day. [Recording pauses.]

JB: Why don't you start talking about the drug store then?

EC: Actually, I've got a question first, then. You said that a number of African American men at the back of the bus, they said that they should leave you alone?

SD: Yes.

HS: And that was in the black community, which is a rough part of the city.

SD: Yes, it was in the black community. Yes, Lincoln City.

EC: So there was a sense that ...

SD: He knew he had better kind of back off.

EC: So there's this prerogative and there's this understanding and there's this place but there's also this space to say, "Uh-uh."

SD: Yeah.

EC: How did you feel when they did that?

SD: Oh. I felt that I was taking a chance, number one, doing what I did. But when I heard these voices in the back, I said, "Oh, boy." I was gratified to hear it, but I didn't expect it.

EC: The drug store?

ES: Which Standard was it?

SD: Number two. Standard Drug number two.

ES: I worked there.

SD: This was two weeks after Greensboro, the sit-ins, February of 1960. I was a senior in high school and I had cooked up kind of a scheme to integrate Standard Drug number two with a couple of friends, brothers. Curtis Henderson and Tom Henderson. I asked Curtis to dress as an African diplomat, and he did. His brother was going to be a lookout. We were going to Standard Drug number two to get him served. I was going to be his interpreter. I knew that Ghana had just gotten its freedom the month before, and when we went into Standard Drug, he sat at the counter and I told him, all he needed to say was, "Mgawa," and some derivative thereof. And he would say that to me, he wouldn't say that to anyone else, and I would interpret for him, and I was going to interpret in French. So I let the [1:05:00] waitress know what he wanted to eat, and that he was a diplomat from Washington. He had the appropriate dress on and so forth. She didn't know what to do, but she wrote the order down, the waitress.

EC: Did she understand French?

SD: I talked to her in English.

EC: So where does the French come in?

SD: That's what I was saying to the diplomat.

SD: Ok. He wasn't replying to me in French. He was only using what he heard on Tarzan, ok? Mgawa, bah bah bah. Well, anyway, she got confused and decided to call a manager over. He was a young white fellow, and I explained to him the same thing I had explained to her. And he looked really confused, but I was resolute and he asked to put the order in. I had convinced him that this was an African diplomat and he didn't want to have a diplomatic problem here. So the order goes in and a friend of mine who lived in

my building in the projects [laughter], she started to bring the order out. We had ordered toast, coffee, and eggs. And she saw us standing there and she turned around real quick and handed the order to the original white waitress, and said, "Here, you take it." And she turned and went back in the kitchen. [Laughter]

And sure enough, he was served. And we stood there. I am dying inside, but I am being resolute, and he was eating, and Tom was looking to make sure no police came. And sure enough, we were able to get through the meal and we were able to pay for it, and as we were leaving, Olive came out and saw us leaving [laughing], and you could see nothing but teeth. We got outside and ran back to East Kinston as fast as we could go. We must have broken the hundred-yard dash that day. True story. Yes.

ES: And when I was working, Olive and I worked together so I know exactly what he is talking about.

SD: I thought she was going to drop the dish when she saw us. I never sat. I stood all the time and did the interpreting. And I didn't eat.

EC: So they didn't recognize you, they didn't know you from around town.

SD: No.

EC: So it wasn't a place where you had been on a regular basis.

SD: I had been there but they didn't know who I was. [Laughter]

FS: We took joy in doing things like that, because we knew we couldn't do it, you know, real. So I remember once my sister, we went to the drug store. I can't remember if it was number one or number two, but the place was filled with white people, so we had to wait and wait and wait. And she had put in a prescription. And it took them so long. I know it must have been at least twenty-five, thirty minutes. She says, well, "When they

bring it, I think I am going to just drop it.” So when they finally brought the prescription and they handed it to her, she didn't pay them, but she just dropped it. And somehow that just gave us so much satisfaction, because they had made us wait so long. So we just took pride in doing little things like that that we knew we could get away with. And so when we dropped it, of course we left.

SD: One other thing on that point. My sister, the one that's next to me, Hilda, used to go into the department stores. They had black water, white water? She used to take the light and go into see what white water tasted like.

ES: It was colored.

SD: Colored, yeah. White and colored. So she could go and taste it. And that became kind of a thing to do, because later on, my sister-in-law used to do it as well, Yvonne.

CJ: I think we've all done that, just to see what would be the difference.

FS: I didn't try that.

SD: It [1:10:00] was the kind of thing ... you know, you're faced with situations, and you're saying, “What can I get away with?”

CJ: In almost every store, you have those water fountains, one black, one white.

EC: Were they equivalent in Kinston, or were they obviously ... you know, because some of them had the coolers, the white ones had the coolers and the black ones didn't.

SD: It depended on the store.

HS: We had a subtle way of getting back. I was an avid baseball fan as a child. Won a glove. They pulled my name. And I went to get my glove. Question was, whether

they were going to award it to me at the ballpark. But they did the right thing and gave me my glove. But, the Kinston Indians was a team, still is to this day, and right beside the stadium there was a railroad track, and there were some supplies in there. Budweiser beer. And we could get in the car. And I don't know, Jackie, were you ever part of this?

Male: I knew about it.

HS: You knew about it. Well, anyway, my brother and I were pretty good guys. But we wanted some of that beer also. We would take the beer, maybe three bottles, they had the big size, and put it in the stream behind Mitchell Wooten Court and cool it. And we had a good time with the beer about three months until they find out what is going on, and they took some of the guys to court, but they did not implicate my brother and I. I know I had at least two quarts of beer, but they didn't implicate us because we were supposed to be pretty good guys. So they got the guys in court, said, "How many beers did you drink?" "One." "How many?" "Two." "How many?" "Three, maybe." And that went on and on and on, but that was just a subtle way of getting back.

EC: Were most of your interactions with whites either through work or public places like the drug store?

CJ: Well, I indicated I lived on Reid St., which was on the edge of Lincoln City, it is either going in or coming out. But next to me was a apartment complex called Simon Bright, mostly poor whites. And they were not much any better than we were in terms of finances, so forth. There was a guy called Bo, little white fellow about the same age. And we would go out to the sand hole. We had sand holes. We didn't have swimming pools back then. And we would go out and swim, and come back. Except like Jackie, I shined shoes as well. And I would have to go through the apartments. They were not well to do

enough in the apartments to have their shoes shined so I had to walk through the apartments to the better class of white. When I say better class I mean better economic class. And I shined shoes, and we'd walk all the way to the bus station, and we'd shine the shoes and come back. And that is what I did on Sunday mornings. And so I have my money that I was making at that time all the week. So that was my experience.

JD: My experience was sort of negative, because I also loved to go to the movie, and in order to get to the movie, I had to walk down Main St., pass by the white theater to get to the black theater. And invariably these white kids knew we were coming. And that was a tough time. They threw rocks. Every Saturday they'd be in waiting for us. They threw rocks. And that was a very harmful experience because we used to have to do a lot of running.

FS: Well, I did. Not going to the movie, but I used to ride my bicycle to my aunt's house. I lived on Shine St., which was I guess lower Kinston, and my aunt lived on Macon St., which was a little distance. And I had to go, we used to ride the bicycle through the mill, which was so dangerous. It was a wooden mill, I believe. And immediately [1:15:00] after I would leave the mill, I went into what we used to call, it was a very bad white section. And one day I was cornered by these white boys, and they took my bike, and knocked me off my bicycle, and spit on me. And I got up, and finally got to my aunt's house, but I did that, that happened to me once, but it was a frightening time to go through that area again. But it did happen to me again.

EC: Did they keep the bike? Were you able to get the bike back?

FS: No, they gave me the bike. They just wanted—

EC: They were just harassing you, knock you off and all that, and then—



FS: Just harass me, just harass me.

[Recording pauses.]

EC: So, maybe we could talk about the school walk out now. I think we could probably keep going with these stories for a long time. [General assent.]

JC: It's fascinating stuff, though.

SD: We just skimmed the surface.

EC: I think we all know. [Laughs.] Can somebody start us off with maybe where the idea, what you remember about where the idea for the walkout came from?

JD: I'm your guy. It happened in our class, the class of 1952. Ok. We were a class of individuals who probably started from kindergarten to twelfth grade, eighty percent of us were together throughout our school experience. So through that process, there was a lot of trust, a lot of helping each other get through school. That followed from first, third grade, all the way through twelfth grade. Now, so that kind of tells you about the interaction and the love we had for each other. Ok. Out of that, we used to have a civics class on Wednesday. We'd talk about different things in the community, responsibility in the real world. This particular day, B.C. Davis, Huzzy now, B.C. Davis, she was our teacher. She was a very motivational teacher and a very serious teacher. And that day we were doing our weekly reader, and the topic for that day was what an ideal school has. What an ideal school had.

So we saw all those items a good school has. We asked Mrs. Davis, is there a school in our area that has these things. She says, yes, the school up on the hill. The white school. Grainger High School. So, being civic-minded in a class that was very serious, and we were considered the unique school class in the school. We had A and B. A was

college preparatory class. And the B mainly, the person was going into a trade or whatever. So we were sitting in there, looking at each other. So we said, "Mrs. Davis," just spontaneously, "could you leave the room?" And she didn't relent. She said, "Ok, I'll leave." So we began to discuss how we can go about getting some of the things we needed. So we came up with eight items.

Now, why we had her to leave the room, because we wanted to discuss this, and that was a good thing. Because we didn't want her to get involved in any of the process, as the teacher having started something. And here, we had pretty dynamic kids.

EC: She must have had an idea of what you were doing.

JD: She had an idea, maybe. No, she didn't have an idea, because I'll tell you something that happened later. Because what you will read is that she didn't know what the heck was going on. She really didn't know what the heck was going on. [1:20:00] But anyway, we began to discuss.

EC: Can I just interject? What I'm curious about is the idea of a teacher walking out and leaving students. So she must have trusted you, at least, on some level.

JD: The class. Itself. She knew we were very responsible kids. Jackie and Frances, they'll tell you. Our class was kind of special. And they trusted us. And you'll find the trust later on. So we began to discuss the things we wanted to do. First thing we said, "Hey. Let's put down the items or the things that we need, and find out when the school board meet, and petition the school board to get these things to our school. Ok. So, we call the school board. We found out the school board meet on Monday. We ask them, we would like to come in, a group of Adkin High School seniors. All seniors. And they just said yes. They didn't ask us what we wanted or anything. They just allowed us to

come.

So during that week, that Wednesday through the Friday, prior to going that Monday, we decided alternative plans, in case the board didn't respond appropriately. And we decided to meet with the students, we brought the other class in, because we wanted them to be a part of it, of the twelfth grade, and some juniors. And we made them a part of the discussion after we had got pretty much what we wanted to do. Basically, we met. Stewart, the principal, allowed us to meet in the auditorium first, without any teachers around, because, again, he knew the class and that we were considered responsible kids.

EC: Is the meeting during class time or after school?

JD: No, during class time. The first meeting. Now, the next meeting was in the old barn. We are strategizing and organizing. We said, now if the board didn't give us the proper response, we are going to walk out. We hadn't decided what the proper response would be. So, that week, leading to Monday, we strategized. And we had everybody on board, 720 students. We told them not to tell your parents or your teacher what's going on. And do you believe to this day, 2013, nobody has ever told me that an adult knew what was going on. Kids.

EC: How many people were in your class?

JD: About twenty-five, thirty. Ok. So, we had our little plan set. The sign was, Carolyn Stewart has lost her red pocketbook.

ES: Carolyn [Colefielder].

JD: Carolyn Colefielder. Thank you, dear. Has lost a red pocketbook. If anybody finds it, please bring it to the office. So, we met with the board that Monday around about

seven o'clock. They call us in around 7:30, maybe 8:00. They said, "Ok, you kids can come in." There were seven of us, but we went with a committee of five. To go in with the board. We had our thing all typed out. We gave it to the superintendent of the board. He looked at it. He passed it to the next person. Five board members. They passed it around and said, would you excuse me for a minute. And we left the room. Waited about eight, ten minutes and they called us in. They said, who sent you? That's the first thing they asked us. Who sent you?

We said, nobody sent us. "You can tell us. Who sent you?" "Nobody sent us." So, they said, "Look, what you kids are asking for is not in the budget for the next ten years." We looked at each other, we walked out. We said thank you very much. We left. That was on Monday. That Tuesday, the announcement was made. Now, there's a little [1:25:00] confusion about that. Because I did announcements every morning, for about five, six minutes of what's going to happen for the day. Frederick Thompson and myself. And I really made the announcement or we made it together. The secretary always wanted to say that she made the announcement, so you may come into that. But I made the announcement. Even if I didn't make it, I told her what to say, because that was the design for everybody to get out of their seats, and do you believe, when I made the announcement, 720 students got out of their seats, orderly, went to pick up their placards that we had already made up in case the board didn't respond properly, and we marching down Queen St., marching down Queen St. No incidents. People curious to what was going on. Teachers running around, "What's going on? What's going on?" And we gone.

These kids trusted us tremendously, and I've inquired many times since I've thought about it, what could have happened. Because, these members of the school board

came to our school to get those five kids together who met with us. Bring them in. They brought us in. We are out of school, however, but we are still around the school strategizing. Because we had to have a plan as to when the kids were coming back, and all of that. This is a Monday. So, they told us, said, “Look. You know. You’re seniors. You’ll not benefit from what you’re asking.” I said, “There is a benefit because we have brothers and sisters. And a quality education is very important.” They said, “But if any of those kids, 720 kids, get into any problems in the community while they’re out of school, you guys aren’t going to graduate.” We said, “Well, so be it. We’re going to take our chances.”

So that happened. We didn't go back to school until the next Monday after Thanksgiving. And we went on back, we gave the announcement to the kids. We had key people to call. Key numbers. And that got everybody back. Seven hundred and twenty students came back that Monday after Thanksgiving, same way they walked out. And that was pretty much it. But there was some situations. It was the coldest day of the year, and Jackie lived on the front row. See, we all kept congregating at a theater across the street from the projects. They knew exactly where to come. We marched down the street, we dispersed there. But it was a cold day and Jackie had quite a few of the kids come to his house.

ES: I went to the Carver Theater.

JD: Yeah we went to the theater, the Carver Theater. And Jack got into trouble for that. But at any rate, that’s pretty much what happened, but during that time, Dr. Hannibal, his wife—what was her name?

Multiple speakers: Alice. [Alice Priscilla Stateman Hannibal]

ES: They were my next-door neighbors.

JD: Being independent, because her husband didn't have to cater to anybody. And that's why we didn't want our parents to know, or our teachers, because we didn't want anybody to lose his job. We had all that figured out at seventeen, eighteen years of age.

EC: I have a number of follow-up questions, but before I ask those I wonder if some of the rest of you could say when you heard about it, or how you found out, or what your reactions were. Whether you knew before the announcement, those kinds of things.

FS: Well, I think that the president of our class was a part of the committee. So he was feeding the information back to us.

EC: What did you think when you heard about it.

FS: You know, I really didn't think too much of it. I thought it was a great thing to do. I was afraid, very, very much afraid because I was wondering, "When I get home, what in the world am I going to say to my parents?" But I went along with the crowd.

EC: What did you say to your parents?

FS: Well, they asked me [1:30:00], and they were very, very kind about it, and loving about it. They asked what we had done and if we had thought about it. And I told her yes, and there were no punishments for that.

ES: Well, what I guess our parents must have thought, they knew that we had second-class everything. The books, anything we got was passed on from the white kids to us. And sometimes they were torn pages, you know. So, I guess underlying, I guess, when our parents found out about it, they didn't have a problem with it. They just couldn't say anything or be a part of it, and since 720 of us had walked out, they knew that they couldn't do anything to us because they were kids but they could do something to our

parents and our community. So they didn't say anything, our parents never said anything about it. So the thing was to get us back in school because they didn't know if we had a plan B or a plan C. So that was a way that they thought they could keep us under control. And even my husband, who is deceased now. He walked out, too. His father was our principal. And he didn't even tell his father, you know, so it was a thing that we kept our mouths shut. And in many cases we were afraid, but we felt, well, if everybody else is going to do it ... And when we met with the leaders, the teachers weren't around anyway.

JD: They allowed us to meet.

ES: They allowed us to meet. They weren't. So they told us what to do, and we just followed along.

FS: And during that procession, as we were going downtown—

ES: Wasn't that amazing.

ES and FS: There was no talking.

ES: We just rose up.

FS: There was no talking.

ES: Just like a, I don't know how, it was just a strange kind of feeling.

FS: It was.

ES: You just kind of rose up when that announcement was made. I was on then top floor. I don't know where you were. And we just walked quietly on out, picked up whatever we were supposed to pick up, and went on down the main street or wherever they told us to go. It was just an amazing thing that kind of happened, and we just did it.

Elaine Nichols: I want to ask a question. You said that you made placards, so where did you place the placards so that the administrators didn't see it.

JD: Well, I think the kids did a good job of hiding them. We didn't have them to bring them any particular place, but we told them, "Be careful how you do it." And they did it. However, I don't recall us saying bring all the placards to a certain place. But when we walked out, wherever they got them, they had them. And we were going down Main St.

FS: Do you remember what any of them said?

JD: Nobody said anything.

FS: I said the placards.

JD: "Quality Education," and things like that.

SD: It was my understanding, and of course I'm a fourth grader now, that the placards were all off campus.

FS: Oh yeah, they weren't at the school.

JD: Oh no, they weren't at the school. They did them off campus.

SD: Maybe at the Carver Theater, or somewhere around Mitchell Wooten.

JD: I think most of them ended up at the Carver Theater.

EC: Did any of the teachers, what did they say? Did they try to stop you?

ES: They were amazed.

CJ: Let me say that, now, my class was the first class, and I was in seventh grade. They were the upperclassmen. Well, I had this religious old lady teacher. Won't call the name. And when we heard all the walking, all the steps. "What's going on?" And maybe our class leader said, "We marching." "No you're not." And she stood in front of the door, until we would exchange class, I think my next class would be my math class now, straight down the hallway. And so we went out then, but by that time they were gone, had



gone already. And we went out and stayed by the flagpole until they got back. And then we became a part of the group. But that was my individual class. But the class leader in our class knew what was going on because he had met with the group, but she would not [let us] participate.

EC: So you didn't know what was going on, really, until.

CJ: No, I knew afterward because the student representative, she simply barred the door.

EC: Right. And so after you got down to the flagpole ...

CJ: There was a separation. [1:35:00]

JD: They were well schooled. Believe it or not, the five of us expressed no fear. We never even felt anything other than, let's do this because it's needed. And even to this day, up until 2010, we didn't even talk about it. We never met as a group to discuss what we had done. And even until 2010, it did not strike me as the significance of what happened. 2010, when we did a reenactment of the situation. Because it wasn't for publicity. We wanted to raise awareness—

CJ: The significance of it.

JD: —of it. And the beauty of it all, as you'll probably read later, that ten years turned into eighteen months. Everything we had petitioned, eight items, and you'll read about those, were built in eighteen months. We had all gone to college, and we came back. That's when we saw what had happened.

EC: How did you make the decision to go back on that Monday? Had you gotten assurances, because the little bit I've read from the newspaper, which I understand is one kind of source, says, that the school board, the superintendent kept saying, "Well, we

don't have the money for that, and I can't promise that, etc. What is your recollection, and how was that decision made?

JD: Well, the decision was made because we knew we had done what we had to do. We couldn't stay out for ten years. That's a fact. So the five of us go together, that's the committee, and said, let's get them back in. On that weekend, we made a decision that we would call key people that we had already designated, to call key members. And everybody got the message. We had it pretty well coordinated. I continue to be amazed.

EC: Did you do that because you felt like you had made the point you could make and there wasn't more you could do?

JD: Exactly.

EC: Did you have a sense that your demands would be met within eighteen months or a certain time period?

JD: No.

EC: You just didn't know. You felt you had made your point?

JD: We had made the point. We had done as much as we could do. Now, there was some reaction. Dr. Hannibal. Alice Hannibal. She wrote some letters to the school board and the paper expressing her civic feelings. Now, she got some threats. She got some threats.

EC: What kind of threats.

JD: To bomb her house or burn it down. So there were six seniors who spent a week at her house, and I don't like to talk about ... we were ready. That's as much as I am going to say about that.

EC: So you were staying at her house in response to these threats to try to ensure

that she was safe.

JD: Yes ... she was safe. Two to three of us stayed for a week. I stayed three nights. I remember going from her house to school every morning.

EC: Were there threats against any of your families?

JD: No. Not that I know of.

FS: See, because they didn't say anything. They didn't have any ...

JD: They didn't do anything.

EC: It doesn't always ...

ES: It came back to the students and they didn't know what we were going to do. And they didn't talk about it. It wasn't talked about.

SD: There was thing that happened in my family. Remember I told you my mother took in laundry. And Jake Strother, who was the editor I believe at the time, of the *Free Press*. He did ask her what she knew about that activity. And of course all she could tell him was, "I don't know anything." Which is to say that if she did know something, and had told him, given him some kind of inference, that he would have used that [1:40:00] as an economic thing to withdraw support of her.

EC: Basically, people as far as you know took it at face value that only the young people knew and so they didn't actually try to use pressure through the parents.

JD: No.

EC: Because in some places they would do that.

[General assent.]

EC: You mentioned before that one of your classmates was the principal's son. Your husband?

FS: Yes.

EC: So what was the principal's position on, how did he respond to the situation?

FS: Well, John can tell you what he said.

JD: Well, when the teachers were running around trying to find out what's going on, what's going on, he made one statement: leave those kids alone. That's all he said. And even when the school board came out the next day, on Wednesday, he was very calm. He admitted that he didn't know what the situation, but it happened. And he didn't show any emotion. As I remember he was in the room. He was cool. He was a good man. He was just a good man. And I guess he felt within, he understood.

EC: So it sounds like at least a number of your teachers and your principal were probably supportive of you, even though they were limited in their ability to express this.

JD: That is very true.

FS: That's a good way to put it.

JD: That's a good way to put it. Because even to the point they allowed us to meet on two or three occasions without any teachers or adults being—

ES: Around.

JD: —around. That's amazing.

EC: That's very significant, yes.

JD: That's very significant.

EN: I want to ask a point of clarification. What were the grade levels at your school?

CJ: From the seventh through the twelfth. I was seventh grade that year and Dudley was twelfth grade. President of the class, too, were you not?

JD: Yeah. No, vice president. Frederick [1:42:13] beat me out. Always. I was always second.

EC: So a little over a hundred students in each grade? [The group speculates.]

JD: Two seventh grades.

EC: Seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. So that would be six grades and seven hundred and twenty students. So I am trying to figure that out.

FS: We had A and B.

JD: A and B. I think each grade had at least two classes, at least two.

CJ: Two sections, A and B sections.

JD: A and B sections.

ES: But when it all ended up, we received a state-of-the-art gymnasium. State-of-the-art.

JD: Largest building on the east coast.

FS: We had a home economics suite. We had classrooms, band room.

JD: Everything we asked for.

FS: Yeah. Everything.

EC: And so ...

JD: And more.

FS: And more.

EC: So you said eighteen months, so I am thinking, so this is mid-'53, so this is when the Supreme Court is actually considering *Brown*, when the new facilities, so this is in the, at least the backdrop, probably the school board and the superintendent are at least somewhat aware that the *Brown* case is going on.

CJ: And there was some other case up in Virginia, but not led by the students.

EC: I wanted to ask about that. Yes, sir.

SD: I can give you context on that whole scenario. There was a case in Virginia, which was led by the daughter of NAACP president.

EC: Barbara Johns?

SD: Yes. And there was a case in South Carolina, one in Delaware, and one in D.C. And of course the one in Kansas. Had we litigated, of course, that case would have been joined with the one that ultimately became *Brown vs. Board*, but we did not litigate. And the other unique thing of course, about it that you just stated, was this was completely student led, no adults really involved. Barbara Johns's father advised them all along the way. [Recording pauses.]

JB: Ok, we're back.

EC: I actually wanted to ask that, because your walkout is November '51, am I right? [1:45:00]

JD: Right.

EC: And in Prince Edward County, the walkout that led to the case coming out of there [*Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County*] at Moton High School was organized in late April of 1951. And so I wondered, I know that it got some publicity, so I wondered if any of you had been aware of that or if this is, you know, one of those situations where students in a number of places are having similar reactions.

JD: No.

EC: No you didn't?

JD: That was never part of our discussions when we organized this thing. We

didn't know about that situation.

EC: You didn't know about it? Yeah. It's interesting that students in multiple places are coming up with the same initial strategy. Now, you mentioned that you were reading in the weekly reader about what's an ideal school, and you asked your teacher where would one of these be. Did you all have much awareness of what the white schools were like at that time in the community, or think about those differences?

HS: Yes, to some degree. Especially with the athletic department. We knew they were on a level higher than us simply because our athletic equipment, and we had a pretty good athletic team, basketball and football, we, our equipment were hand-me-downs from Grainger High. And we only got those because we had a young man, Mr. Busby, who worked for the recreation department, and he used to work—we didn't have little boys and girls clubs like they have now, but he knew that we needed some equipment with which to participate, and he used to go and collect that used equipment that Grainger High had, and bring that to us. And you know, when I think about it now, it's a miracle that some of us are still alive. No seriously, with the inadequate equipment that we used for our athletic teams, especially our football program.

We had what we called "Halloween helmets." What do they call them? Lanterns. We used for helmets, headgear. By the grace of God, none of us got seriously injured. And in 1953, after they graduated, we won the state championship for North Carolina. We won the state championship. We beat the Little Blues of Raleigh, for the eastern championship. We beat Dudley High for the state championship. And we didn't have a place to play. We had to have, the championship for the state of North Carolina football, in school year 1952-53, was held in Kinston, North Carolina, and we had to play that at

Grainger High stadium, because we didn't ... and the only reason we got to play there is because our coach and Grainger High's coach, Mr. Grice was his name, but the Grainger High coach was Mark ...

SD: Frank Mark.

HS: Frank Mark. And our coach, you know, coaches, there wasn't so much of that with coaches. And he had them to give us permission to play the state championship game in that stadium. Here you would have thought that being the state champion we would have the support of the community, not to mention the fact that when we got ready to get awards and our jackets, what we had to go through to be recognized as state champions of the state of North Carolina.

JD: Let's go back; let's go to the gym.

EN: Can you say some more about what you had to go through to receive the awards?

HS: I mean not the awards, I mean to get recognition. I mean, in other words, you win a state championship, you get jackets. But in most instances the community would grab you and give you the support. We didn't get that. We had to do fish fries and raise all kind of money to raise the money to get people to get jackets for the championship football team.

FS: In other words, there were no awards dinners, no receptions ... [crosstalk]

HS: We went undefeated our senior year. We only had two points scored on us our whole senior year, and that was a visiting school from New Bern, North Carolina. They came, we played them, we beat them 7-2. For the eastern, for the chance to represent the East in Raleigh, during the Thanksgiving holidays, and we went to Raleigh. And this



game was broadcast in Raleigh, and we beat the Little Blues in Raleigh. And then we played Dudley High [1:50:00] the following week for the state championship.

JD: And the year before that we had a team that went 8-2. I played on that team. But I wanted to get to the gymnasium. As you are going to read, the gymnasium was built by students.

CJ: The early one.

EC: Was this part of shop class?

JD: Vocational class. [Crosstalk] They built the gym. Now, the gym was so small, that everybody almost was touching the line. It had no seats.

HS: You can imagine this being the gym. This right here is a good example. This here is the floor and everybody else is standing around during the game. That's the gym floor.

ES: And the pot-bellied stove.

SD: And on cold days you had a pot-bellied stove, and somebody could have been seriously injured. And so we had one game where—oh, I shouldn't tell this but anyway, I'll tell it—one of the girls from the other team took the ball out of bounds, and somebody stuck a pin in her. And she went to the ref and the ref said, "Who did it?" And she pointed at me. And Mrs. Davis, B.C. Davis, saw them walking me across the floor to put me out of the game. And she said, "Wait a minute. What's going on here?" She said, no, the ref said, "He's been accused of having stuck a pin in one of the opposing players." Mrs. Davis says, "No, indeed. Take him back. Dudley didn't do that." And I didn't do it.

But another thing that brought significance to the situation was that Althea Gibson, the great Althea Gibson, played for two years in that gym. And she would always

beat our team by herself. She was a great athlete. And I just threw it in as a sidebar.

EN: What were the circumstances of her playing in that gym?

JD: She lived in North Carolina.

HS: She played for another high school. [Crosstalk] Williston, North Carolina. Williston High School, which is located in Wilmington. And girls used to dribble two times, and had to pick the ball up and pass it. Half court. But she was so great that I guess she was a great part in them using the full court, because she was fantastic. She could have made any men's team.

SD: We talked about the deficient equipment. Adversaries used to describe the helmets we wore in football as tams. That's how bad it was.

EC: That's like, that much help to protect you.

SD: None whatsoever.

FS: But our gym was burned down, right? Jackie, you want to describe that?

HS: It was an accident. [Laughter and crosstalk] Actually what happened is, we had a girl's basketball team [coach] was our biology teacher, our homeroom teacher. He was way ahead of his time. But I was the trainer for the girls' basketball team, which meant I had the key. And you know we didn't have a recreation center, so to speak, so like kids could go. And the only place we had to play. We played two things all year round. We played touch football and we played basketball. It never got too cold to play outside, football, but in the wintertime it gets really cold so we had to go to into the gym, to play in the gym. And so I had the key. And so, you know, we would let all the guys in and we would just go in and play but naturally we had to have a fire while we were playing. And one day, you know, ashes accidentally got on the floor. And the gym

burned down. But that got us a new one. [Laughter.]

EC: So you all helped the school board along with that.

ES: That got us a new one, got us a new one.

FS: And it was state of the art.

HS: And that facility—

FS: Is still standing.

HS: —is still standing, state of the art. The school board [1:55:00] gave it to the school. The alumni association.

EC: Did the school get closed with desegregation like so many did?

HS: Yeah.

FS: 1970.

EC: That's the year. [Crosstalk]

HS: But there was so much that went on during that time. Seriously, right now, the school board would get locked up for some of the things that they did. They didn't even deliver our mail to the school. We had to go pick our mail up from the post office. And that's how I got my lunch. I had a bike. As I was telling you, my father bought me a bike. And my job was to leave the campus and go down to the post office and pick up the school mail, and bring it back. And for doing that, I got a free lunch. That's what I did. We were so far behind, the mailman didn't even deliver the mail to the school. We had to go to the post office downtown on Queen St. and pick up the school mail. And when I think about it, if something could have happened to me on that bike. That's why I said we had the good Lord looking out for us. Seriously.

JD: And our campus would flood every time there was a heavy rain.

SD: A creek ran right by it. It had the same name of the school.

JD: And I had a first cousin who drowned in that creek. And as a result of that, they tore down the whole back side, the eighteen building, twelve building, they tore them down because they were flooded. I remember many days of my home, my apartment building being flooded.

EC: So the school flooded and the apartments, too.

HS: No, the school didn't flood. Adkin ran right behind it. The school didn't get flooded; it was the apartments that were located in Mitchell Wooten Court. And that got flooded. In fact, we didn't have a swimming pool then, when we were there, and that's the only time we really got to swim, so to speak, because of the flood, because the creek would overflow. You know, I almost lost my life once because I was told by some of the older guys, said, well, it was a running stream so all you had to do is jump in and the water would carry you. [Laughter.] And I dove in and only thing that saved me, I grabbed a limb and hold onto it until somebody can come get me. But those are the conditions that we had, not to mention, he mentioned the sand hole—

EC: Can I ask why they wanted to tell you that? [Recording pauses.] So you were saying that Adkin school—

FS: Adkin High School is a Rosenwald school, was a Rosenwald, or is a Rosenwald school. It's gone now.

EC: Is the building gone, too?

FS: [crosstalk] Yes. And even in the list of schools that are Rosenwald schools, it's indicated that it is no longer one.

EN: You know the original building still exists.

JD: The original building does not exist.

SD: The gym exists.

EC: The replacement gym.

HS: The replacement gym is there. The original gym is gone. In fact, the original school is gone.

FS: Hence the industrial courses that we had, that of course being part of the designation, the program for the Rosenwald school.

JB: What were the Rosenwald schools?

JD: Rosenwald was the head of Sears department store, Sears and Roebuck. And because he had made so much wealth, he built schools around the South for black kids.

FS: But he did that because Booker T. Washington approached him about doing it.

CJ: He also might have done it because Sears and Roebuck himself was partly black and they had that connection.

EC: My understanding, too, is that communities had to raise some of the money.  
[General assent.]

FS: But part of the program had to be industrial courses. So that's why we had the shop, and the ...

ES: Brick mason.

EC: You all have mentioned Mrs. Hannibal and number of times. I wonder if you could tell me about her and her impact. You mentioned she was an activist.

HS: She was from the islands. [Crosstalk]

CJ: Mrs. Hannibal was born in New Jersey. [2:00:00] Her husband was West

Indian.

SD: Jamaican.

CJ: And he trained, came to medical school at Fisk University. And she did not work while she was here. And I guess why I knew about her is my aunt was his nurse. Ms. Jarmon, you probably remember. And so at the time they were talking about the school, I could hear a lot about what was going on. Also she was the first black person to be on the city council of Kinston. And it is true that the Klan had burned crosses in her yard. I don't know if any were burned at the time of the march, but it happened over a period of time. She was very much for education and for the improvement of the black community. And so anything she did in that support, because she was also independent, but she also felt that we did not get what we should get under the segregated system that existed in Kinston.

FS: I imagine some of her own children are still around.

ES: They're in Kinston, two of them. [Crosstalk] They were my next-door neighbors, so I was very close to them and got to know them quite well.

CJ: She had about six children. Two of the girls are passed and dead now. The oldest living one is in Buffalo, he's a dentist. The oldest girl became a doctor. And worked a couple years at Soul City in Henderson, under CORE, Floyd McKissick. So you can see that influence is still there in the family. One of the younger boys now is head of the art program in Kinston.

ES: Because when they celebrated the history of Kinston, my choir sang at that celebration with some of the other musicians who took part in it last year. One of her sons was emcee. Charles. And he introduced. But I didn't know him because he was a

youngster, he came along after they ... at one point they moved from beside where we lived on North St., we were right next door, to up on the hill.

EC: Was she someone that you all then were aware of, growing up? [General assent.]

HS: And I was aware of her. Matter of fact, I did their floors.

SD: I was aware of her because she had some really pretty daughters.

EC: And here I was thinking it was because of her activism.

JD: I was aware of her because, this is kind of sidebar. But anyway, we had to come from across town, we had a senior prom, and we had to walk back to our school. No, they had the dinner across town. We walked back for the prom. As we were walking back, I got shot. It was about twelve guys, ok? And they started running. I started running, too. And I got the impact just like a brick hitting me in the back. What happened was, there was a guy named Kenny ... I won't call the name. Kenny Carter. I'll call it. And he was fooling with some guy who was drunk, in the back. He was always doing something. And when they started running, I started running, and I got the impact. And they dropped me off by Dr. Hannibal's office. They tore my coat, little blood on my shirt, and all that. And Mrs. Hannibal happened to be there at the time, and she bathed my back. It broke the skin, but it didn't ... I was lucky, I was lucky. A glancing blow, yeah.

SD: There is a municipal building named for her in Kinston today. It's been there for some time now.

EC: I've got a couple questions, but where are we for time?

JD: Our time is your time. I know we want to eat. We do have food.

EN: How do you spell the last name?

SD: Hannibal? H-A-N-N-I-B-A-L.

JD: I think we're about two and a half hours in, two hours fifteen minutes something like that.

EC: Can I ask maybe two questions for everybody to respond to? One is, I am wondering about your parents' [2:05:00] influence on the decisions that you made, or the actions. I think some of that has already come through but if you wanted to say anything about that. And then I was wondering, if you could, I know there's not nearly enough time but maybe take about a few minutes to tell us about something you've done since high school. A few of you have already, but just at least a little bit, and I know you mentioned that until a few years ago you hadn't really thought about the walkout, and maybe sort of what you think about it now in retrospect. Anybody want to start?

HS: It's very difficult, really, not to have that experience come to bear, because and I say that for this reason. Every other year, we have a class reunion.

FS: High school.

HS: We have a high school reunion in Kinston. And it's at that time, there is a reflection of what happened, back then, during that time. So it's fairly difficult to get it completely out of your system. And we are constantly trying to make some of the people who came after us aware of some of the things that we were confronted with during that time in our lives, you know? So it's ... you got to realize something, too. Most of our parents, for the most part, didn't even attend high school, didn't finish high school. So some of the kinds of things that took place then, they didn't have no conception of, as to have any type of impact, good, bad, or indifferent. You know what I mean? So they didn't have really a bearing on the outcome, or the repercussions, or whatever, because it was so



far removed. You know, it was brought in an area where, you know, if I might just use the phrase, if Mr. Charlie—Charlie is the term we are using now for the other persuasion—Charlie said, “You do this,” you did it and you didn’t question it.

CJ: Let me add to your, I recall that as a student, I was a college student at North Carolina College in Durham in 1961, 2, 3. And Floyd McKissick was there, who was head of CORE at that time. And we were marching on the theaters and the cafeterias to break down the segregation. And the students, we were walking down the street, down Federal St., going down. And there were adults on the side: “Why don’t you kids go back to school? You don’t have any business walking down there.” That’s what he was saying. They were not in perspective. They had a different view about what we were doing as students. So I would assume that even back in ’52, you can imagine what it was like. So I heard nothing about it. Nothing in the family. Mrs. Hannibal did.

EN: These were black adults, standing there.

[General assent.]

CJ: On the corners. You have to pass by those corners.

JD: Maybe it had some influence, because I didn’t know I was a leader, but I led in high school: vice president of the class, vice president of my class practically every year. Frederick Thompson, who was part of the committee, always came out number one because he was a very smart guy. But when I got into college, that followed me. My sophomore year, president of the class. My junior year, president of the class. My senior year, resident of the class and also president of my college student body. That was very important as I think back on it, but I never looked at myself as a leader, but maybe other people looked at it that way. Because I don’t think I had the influence from my parents. It

was innate. And part of it was the kind of teachers that we had back in high school.

CJ: That was very important.

JD: They were serious and dedicated teachers. It wasn't the education we were getting. That wasn't the problem. It was the facility, [2:10:00] and how those things could advance our education.

ES: I wanted to say, at one point my husband was president of the Adkin High School Alumni Association for thirteen years, and at one point I said to him, there are many students who don't know about this walkout. They don't know about how we got this gymnasium. All they know, is it's there. So I said to him, I said, "Reggie, should we call Frederick Thompson and ask him to tell that story, what have you, so that we could put it up in our gymnasium, or share it with the students." You know, they come along. So he said well, yeah, he said call him. So I called Frederick. And he told me a lot of things, even though I walked out. A lot of things that we didn't know. And he wrote me a letter. Honest to goodness, I don't know where that letter is today, because it would be priceless if I could find it. But when he wrote that, what Reggie and I did, we sat up, night after night, putting that story. And he called John, because your name is attached to the story, and I keep it in my house. It's downstairs, you'll see. He put it on the computer, and wrote that story out. And he put it up in the gymnasium building. When we have our reunion, people come back and they're so excited about seeing each other, but a lot of times, they don't take the time to really read it. So I have suggested with our D.C. chapter alumni association, that when we have our banquet, because we have a banquet every year, is that we need to make a PowerPoint presentation, because the sound system in our gymnasium is not that great, and you sit with your classes and everyone's talking, and in

the back they can't hear a lot. So I said if we did this PowerPoint presentation, it would get everyone's attention, and we can tell that story.

And my niece said to me at one of our meetings, she said, "You're my aunt. You're sitting here. You never told me how we got this gymnasium." I said, "Your mother was head of the cafeteria back then, and she didn't tell you." But they didn't talk about it for many reasons, and one was probably the backlash that they could have gotten, what have you. But he and I sat up in the office and we put it on the computer and it is hanging in our gym. But we could do more in getting it out to our alumni, so I hope we can do that presentation that way. Y'all think that's a good idea?

FS: Yeah. I think we all appreciate the walkout and what the class of '52, how they organized it, we appreciate it more every year and as we grow older we understand the importance of it and the impact it has had on our lives. My parents, my father did go to college. He went to college one year. He went to St. Augustine College in Raleigh, and then the family that was supporting him, the money ran out, so he never finished. My mother never went to college, but he did impress upon us to go to school. But as far as that walkout, it really is important. I see the significance of it much, much more. But we need to tell our story.

ES: Yes.

FS: We need to continue to tell it. We really do. We really don't do that well enough.

JD: Can you talk about that? The degree? The status we've applied for?

CJ: You're talking preservation?

EN: National Register of Historic ...?

CJ: We have applied for the National Register of Historic ...

SD: Historic Preservation.

CJ: Historic Preservation. For national recognition of the gym. And at this point I have to say that that application was withdrawn. It was devised by us by the regional director from Greenville, that because there are some imperfections on the gym, that is things that were modified since it was originally built, what the most important is, that we don't have ... The windows at the back of the gym have been covered over. I think they may be the original ones, but they may need to be restored, restoration. [2:15:00]

Secondly, and maybe the first is that the original school is not there. That is not there. And then there's an extension where there are apartments, and it abuts the gym. And they wanted to know to what extent the integrity of that gym has been changed and modified. Well, it has been modified. There are twenty-three apartments there.

And so we're not sure exactly how that will work out. And so, he said in light of other applications from the state of North Carolina, where you have the buildings almost complete, as they are, this would not be a good time to submit it. So we had to withdraw our application.

FS: I wonder if the fact that it's a Rosenwald school would have any impact on that, because there is a move afoot to preserve those schools.

CJ: See, that's the point.

FS: We don't have the school, I know. I know the school isn't.

CJ: I think it's part of the cultural history. We indicated it was not because of the architectural nature of the building that we were trying to get recognition. But the significance of it. In other words, the gym is still associated with the school. It was Adkin

High School. And so it was torn down, I think you mentioned that, because of the asbestos problems. Also because it was just decrepit. It was not being kept up. And so if we had more foresight and money at that time, we could still have preserved the school, but we didn't have the insight, we didn't have the knowledge that we have now. And so the school was torn down.

JD: If I can make on other point of significance, as I see it. The story that I gave the editor in 2010, he won the national award, editor of the year, for having penned that story. So that means the state did recognize the significance of what happened.

[Recording pauses.]

ES: I was saying my husband, as he was president, he had an artist come in and draw the school, and honest to goodness when you walk into that faculty room with all of our teachers' pictures, it looks just like you are walking into that school. So that was his way of keeping that school preserved and alive to us.

CJ: It looks real, too.

ES: It really does.

SD: I wanted to respond to your question. I didn't get a chance.

EC: Well, I actually had another question for you, too, so I'll throw that at you at the same time. If I understand correctly, you brought the walkout to the attention of the Smithsonian.

SD: That is correct.

EC: So I wondered if as part of answering the question you can speak to why you thought it was important to do this interview and have this story.

SD: Well, I knew the nation was missing out on a really good story, on the one

hand. On the other hand, this provided for me, because I am younger than everybody, a step out into the Civil Rights Movement for myself. I took my first overt actions against Jim Crow, as I indicated, on the bus, and then to a lunch counter in Kinston. But it went beyond that. I joined CORE as a result of going to New York and taking a bus ride back and being asked to get off in Baltimore and then take a local bus from Baltimore to Washington to chart where black people stood, where they could go to bathrooms or purchase goods or so forth. And just to do that between those two cities in December of 1960. Little did I know that four months later, the Freedom Rides would be occurring, and what I was doing was intelligence for the Freedom Rides, because James Farmer had asked me to do this. So I was in CORE for about a year before joining SNCC. And as a student in college at that time, I used, because I was on two teams, at the University, I was able to use those trips to other campuses to organize. And that's what I did.

EC: How did you approach that?

SD: How did I? As I traveled from campus to campus, [2:20:00] first I would talk to some of the ball players about what kinds of activities they were doing to further integration. And sometimes they would say, well, we're not doing very much because this is a private university, or because people are scared. There are always reasons why they weren't doing things. So I would encourage them that, you know, here's a way to take that step. And I would take the time, if I had the time at that moment, to show them organizing principles and leave a phone number so that they could get in touch with either me or somebody else, so that we could further it. Sometimes you would go to a campus and there would be people who were already organizing so you'd begin to form an alliance with that university. And it was university students who were doing a lot of

this work, as you know.

Well, it got so heated at the school that I went to, Fayetteville State University, that at one point we had any number of people in the street in Fayetteville, doing picketing, boycotting, sitting in. And on a very hot day we just decided to take a break and I went in for a soda along with a colleague and he kind of took his time to getting it, so I just kind of leaned against a stool. We didn't intend to sit, but I did sit after he bought it because now I'm tired. And I'm drinking. And he tells me that I can't do that because I am not allowed. That's when I really got comfortable on the stool. So he calls the police. The police comes. It's a sergeant, he has his name and badge number right across here. And he begins to question me about my draft card. Well, I knew that I did not have to produce my draft card. He wanted my identification. So he began to harass me, basically.

At which point soldiers from Fort Bragg, from Connecticut and New York, who were sitting nearby, white soldiers, began to get angry at him and just told him in salty language to get out. Well, I had to kind of counsel them to, "Hey, take it easy. This is our fight. We'll get through it." Well, he goes out and brings the police chief of Fayetteville, North Carolina back in. Long story short, they take me into custody, to Pope Air Force Base, the FBI office. Since I wouldn't identify myself, they were going to make me identify myself. So they took me to the FBI office, at which point they asked the FBI agent to have me produce the draft card. Back in those days, you had to carry it. If you didn't you were going straight to the Selective Service board. Well, I had it so the FBI agent ... we were in a separate room, he asked me for it. I said, yes, I do have it but I am a student and I am here on false presence and I don't really need to show it to you. And he says, "Well, you know. I really do have to cooperate with these guys." And I said, "Ok. If

that means, anything that happens to me, the blood is going to be on your hands.” He says, “Well, I have to cooperate with these guys.” So I showed him. They take me back to where they picked me up, and as the sergeant gets out of the car, the police chief says to me, “Look, if I ever get you in my jail, you might not come out alive.”

Two weeks later, we get a cease and desist order, an injunction with all the leaders’ names on it, and of course mine is there. And I knew at that point that there was no way on God’s earth that I was going to answer that. Because if I went down and jaywalked, I was in his jail. [2:25:00] And if I spit on the sidewalk, I was in his jail. I went to New York and I never went back to Fayetteville State again, alright? But it didn't stop me. I continued, with a foot in school, I continued working and I continued organizing. I organized in every southern state except Mississippi, and several western states, and some northern states. And I observed a number of my friends and colleagues leave us prematurely, too many of them, prematurely. So I decided that if I lived to be fifty-five years old, that I would retire, and that’s what I did. But in the interim, throughout the rest of time in terms of the Civil Rights Movement itself, which some will characterize as being to 1970, I was in SNCC until SNCC ended. I had no part in the March on Washington. I was upstate New York at that time.

EC: You say you were in SNCC until it ended. What was your primary role in the organization?

SD: Actually, it was a funny role because I was in school and I was working. I did things by assignment. I also wrote position papers. And I don't know if you know what those are, but let me tell you. If you wanted to know what SNCC’s position was on any matter, they may not have had one. Somebody had to develop it. And I was the guy who



would write a position paper on it, justify it. I responded to James Forman, so I would go in, say, on a Friday or maybe I'd go in in the middle of the week from school and say to James, "Look, I can be available from Friday to Monday," and he would say, "Ok, I want you in Greenville, Alabama. Here's the person that I want you to contact. So off I go for those two or three days. Sometimes I'm paying my own way, sometimes [Harry] Belafonte or some of those guys would have some money so that I could travel. But that's what I did to stay in the movement. And the position papers, I developed any number of those over time. So it's these beginnings, though, in Kinston that helped to propel that kind of interest and involvement. That was for me.

HS: Even today, I've had a great empathy for youth, dating back to my beginnings because for eight years I chaired the D.C. Coalition for Youth. Dr. Adelman was one of the members. Forty dues-paying youth organizations we had. I chaired that for eight years, and we were primarily responsible for putting Marion Berry's youth summer program together, in terms of a work program. And we closed down the old receiving home, and a lot of other things that we did for youth. But there were forty agencies or more that was in that coalition. So I could say that, probably. Some of the things I did.

JD: Now, Eleanor, I am surprised at you. This kid, I get angry with her because she doesn't like to talk about something that is so significant. Will you please talk about it?

ES: Well, we might not really have a lot of time, but what he's talking about is when I was a teacher, and I've always had an affection for helping youth, like he said. I am in the arts. So before I retired from D.C. public schools in 1993, I formed this boys' choir. [2:30:00] We are now in our twentieth year. We are celebrating our twentieth

anniversary. We made three international tours. The first one was to Austria for Austria's millennium. We were in Switzerland, the cities in Austria, then we went on to Paris, France. Second tour was to England for the International Children's Choir Festival. Boys, took on each tour, probably twenty-five to twenty-seven, thirty boys. The third one was to China for a pre-Olympic music festival. And we have been invited this year to Italy, so I am hoping that I can hold up so that we can do that one. [Laughter.] But it's a long story about that choir, and John brought it up, he wanted me to let you know.

That, I guess from my youth, trying to help my students open their eyes to a larger world, and what they are actually a part of, and seeing other environments. This had been my passion to help boys to do that and it has worked for so many of them. They keep in touch. Right now I have one on Broadway. He's playing for *Motown*, which is the big musical now. Boston. They're all over. You know, opera. Not all of them go in music but the ones that keep in touch, they're successful. We sing each year with the Morehouse men's glee club, which John has heard. We have a partnership with them where the boys have dinner, they talk about college life, that kind of thing. So that's my challenge in my retirement, is to keep up with these boys and to keep them thinking on a larger plane. And to let them know that they can become whatever they want to, but they have to have that exposure so they can know what they can become. So that's just the short part of it.

JD: Thank you, dear.

EC: Well, thank you all very much. I think obviously we could all talk about quite a bit more, but it's been a wonderful interview and we also have your biographical information to fill in. And I forgot at the beginning, I should say that John Bishop is here filming and Elaine Nichols is here with the Smithsonian, also part of the interview. And

thank you again, very much, for the interview and for your wonderful stories. And I'm sorry we don't have several days.

ES: I was going to say, if you want to come back I would be happy to host you. [Laughter.] It's been my pleasure to have you and it's been my pleasure to sit here with my colleagues, to hear part of the story that I didn't know about. I guess each one of us shared something that the others didn't know about. So it's just been a wonderful way of bringing us together, and hopefully supporting our alma mater.

2:32:59

END OF INTERVIEW